

conzernius

THE MISKITO AND SUMU INDIANS

17.

Meanwhile the Twahka lived in the bush. They were wild and unkempt; 173
 their hair fell to their knees and they were full of lice. Finally the King of the
 Miskito sent for them and captured them; he had them washed and altogether
 regenerated them, so that he won their love and obtained their support.¹

The language of the Miskito is closely allied to that of the Sumu, 197
 but it also contains many foreign words. It is very probable that the
 Miskito were originally a subtribe of the Sumu, and that they have 101
 become greatly modified in the course of the centuries through inter- 144
 marriage with Negroes, Europeans, and other Indian tribes. Already
 in 1875, at a time when the relationship of the Miskito and Sumu
 languages was still unknown, Zúñiga Echenique (209) considered the
 Miskito as the offspring of fugitive slaves with Twahka women. Of
 the various Sumu subtribes still existing, the Bawihka is the one
 which linguistically and ethnographically presents the greatest affinity
 to the Miskito. The Bawihka formerly occupied the region imme-
 diately adjoining the coast line where the Miskito were met with by
 the first Europeans during the latter part of the seventeenth century.
 These facts induce me to believe that the hybrid tribe of the Miskito
 owes its origin to the intermarriage of the Bawihka with the Negroes
 escaped from the slave ship which was wrecked to the south of Cabo
 Gracias a Dios in 1641.

These Africans arrived on a Portuguese slave ship captained by 144
 Lourenço Gramalzo. The vessel had taken its black cargo on board
 while anchoring at the Guinea Coast, and then headed for Brazil.
 While on the high seas the Negroes revolted and made themselves
 masters of the ship. Not knowing anything about the art of naviga-
 tion they allowed their vessel to be carried by the trade wind and
 ocean currents toward the coast of Central America, where it became
 wrecked on the Mosquito Keys, situated a little south of Cabo
 Gracias a Dios. The Negroes, who were able to reach the mainland, [567] ●
 were captured by the Indians and reduced to slavery. They were,
 however, allowed to intermarry with their masters, and their children
 grew up as free members of the tribe. (Vide Peralta, b: 57-58, 121;
 Erquemelin, French ed.: II, 276-277; Edwards: V, 210; M. W.: 303,
 307.)

Henderson (216) states, however, that these Africans proceeded
 from the Samba country in West Africa and that their vessel was
 Dutch. This is repeated by Roberts (153), Young (71-72) and De
 Kalb (37). The last named author further specifies that the vessel
 in question was wrecked in 1650 and that the Africans proceeded
 from Samba Island at the mouth of the Cassiri River in Senegambia.
 Bell (b: 3) likewise considered the vessel as Dutch and says that it
 was wrecked near Dakuna at the beginning of the eighteenth century.
 This date is, however, incorrect.

¹ The addition regarding the Miskito King is of recent date. No mention is
 made of the other Sumu subtribes, as the Panamaka, Bawihka, or Kukra.

721 selves consider King Buppan's Bluff (Peñasco de Buppan, Frontón de Guapan), a promontory situated about 22 miles east of Escudo de Veragua Island, as the southernmost point visited by their ancestors.

721 Thus the Miskito acquired an ascendancy over practically the entire
197 Atlantic seaboard from Cabo Honduras (near Trujillo in Honduras) to Chiriqui Lagoon (Panama). Their language is understood by many Indians from the neighboring tribes (Sumu, Rama, and Paya), and still plays the rôle of a *lingua franca* in certain parts of the Mosquito Coast. The part played by the Miskito in Central America in former days is similar to that of the Carib tribes of South America and the Antilles, but in the latter region the rôle of the English was taken by the Dutch.

721 The place names belonging to the Miskito language, which may be
103 met with all along the Atlantic shore of Costa Rica and Panama as far south as King Buppan's Bluff, owe their origin to the above-mentioned marauding expeditions (Conzemius, a: 300-306). Still permanent settlements were not made by the Miskito on that vast region, the southern limit of their habitat being formed by Pearl Lagoon, where they established themselves during the latter part of the eighteenth century. About that same period they also spread up some of the larger rivers, as the Patuca, Guagua (Wawa), Cucallaya, Prinsapolca, Rio Grande, and especially Rio Coco; on the last-named stream they may be found as far up as Bocay, that is, about 300 miles from the sea by the circuitous course of the river.

721 TREATMENT OF PRISONERS.—As stated before, the Miskito began
567 their slave-hunting expeditions into the territory of their neighbors toward the end of the seventeenth century. The captive women and children were either kept as slaves (M.: *alba* ¹¹; S.: *waruu*) or they were sold to the Jamaican traders who arrived occasionally on the coast. The boys, when arrived at the age of puberty, were allowed to take a Miskito wife, and the children of such unions grew up as free members of the tribe.

721 Slave-hunting expeditions in seagoing canoes were particularly directed to the Talamanca region (southeastern Costa Rica), where many Tiribi (Terbi) Indians were reduced to slavery. The same fate met the aborigines living around Chiriqui Lagoon (M. W.: 302; Peralta, a: 20, 93, 95; Peláez: II, 156; Young: 35; Conzemius, a: 300-301). Many references to the Miskito alavers may also be

¹¹ This word has evidently some connection with *albusina*, by which name the Miskito called the Sumu formerly, or perhaps all their Indian enemies in general. The Black Carib or Garif apply to the Miskito the name *idudu*, which word likewise had originally the meaning of "slave." (Compare *idoto* "slave" in Father Gumilla's work.)